

Joint Com on CIA
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Congressional Spotlight on CIA? By Richard Starnes WASH. Daily News, 23/11/64.

THE fight to bring the sprawling, powerful Central Intelligence Agency under control of a joint committee of Congress will be renewed in January.

Congressional control of the CIA is bitterly opposed by John McCone, who heads the nation's huge espionage apparatus, and by most of his top aides. There is, however, an articulate group within the CIA that advocates that the agency yield to pressure to establish a joint Congressional committee.

Their arguments (set forth below) top secret

"book" go as follows:

1. The possibility of security leaks from the committee is remote. It has never happened in the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, and "dark" (spook jargon for secret) expenditures are routinely handled by Armed Services committees. In his "The Craft of Intelligence," former CIA Director Allan Dulles, who walked the plank after the CIA's disastrous adventure at the Bay of Pigs, conceded that he had never experienced betrayal of any secret information thru Congressional leads.

2. A Joint Committee on Central Intelligence is unlikely to hamper the CIA in any legitimate undertaking. Congress has routinely given the FBI more than it asked, and the CIA study of the question assumes it would be accorded the same treatment.

3. The greatest advantage to the CIA would be in a Congressional

committee's ability to divert and dampen the fear and suspicion in which the agency is now held in many quarters here and abroad.

4. There is already an arrangement under which a committee made up of senior members of the House and Senate is periodically advised of CIA activities. This committee also oversees CIA appropriations hidden in other money bills. The only real difference in the proposed joint committee and the existing arrangement (according to the CIA's own study) is that the joint committee would have status under the law, and thus might command more public confidence.

In either case, the House and Senate "establishment" would dictate membership, which in the last Congress included such dedicated boat-rockers as Sens. Russell, Byrd, Stennis and Saltonstall, and Reps. Vinson, Rivers, Hebert, and Arends.

In spite of the strong arguments in favor of establishment of a Joint Committee, however, Mr. McCone has not softened his opposition. President Johnson's position is not known, but Mr. McCone is probably his closest and most trusted adviser, and presumably the President would go along with the CIA director. As Senator, Mr. Johnson voted against establishment of a joint committee in 1956.

Why do we need a watchdog for the CIA?

There are, for example, charges imputing near-treason to high CIA officers at the time of the Bay of Pigs catastrophe which have never been thoroughly investigated. The CIA's headstrong role in Viet Nam is another area that badly needs airing. The whole subject of CIA "fronts," which include at least one airline, a publishing house, a steamship line, at least one travel agency, foundations of cloudy purpose, and others — needs close scrutiny by Congress.